



Interim Forest Management Plan

Property Identifiers

Property Name: **Clay Corners Wildlife Area**

Property Designation or Type: **Wildlife Area**

DNR Property Code: **8523**

Forestry Property Code: **4804**

Property Location - County: **Pierce**

Property Acreage: **151 acres**

Master Plan Date: **N/A**

Property Manager: **Ryan Haffele**

Property Assessment

A. Ecological Landscape and Property Context

Clay Corners WA lies within the Western Prairie Ecological Landscape (WPEL) in the Town of Martell, in northcentral Pierce County located ~ 5 miles southeast of River Falls and 5 miles north of Ellsworth. The ecological landscape was entirely glaciated and includes Land Type Associations 222Md06 and 222Md07. These land type associations consist of outwash plain with well drained soils. The dominate land use in the landscape is agriculture.

Clay Corners WA consists of restored prairie and wooded drainages associated with tributaries to the Trimbelle River. The property contains gently rolling hills associated with the last glaciation. Ecological management opportunities on the property include surrogate grasslands, planted mesic prairie, and management/protection of wildlife, fish, herpetiles, and invertebrates associated with these habitat types.

B. General property description

Pre-settlement vegetation consisted of prairie and brush prairie. After settlement, the property was predominantly row cropped with grazing likely being a minor use. Currently, Clay Corners is dominated by a mix of restored prairie and wooded drainages. The dominant timber type is northern hardwoods with scattered oak pockets present.

Acquisition of the property began in 1994 when the Kinnickinnic Chapter of Pheasants Forever purchased 100 acres and donated it to the department. In 2001, the Chapter purchased another adjacent 51 acres, donating it to the DNR and bringing to total acreage to what is owned today. Primary management of the property has been the



Interim Forest Management Plan

conversion of agricultural lands into native prairie species and timber stand improvement projects to release crop trees and perpetuate oak. Invasive species

control is conducted as needed on the property by Wildlife staff. Adjacent land uses are primarily agriculture and forestlands.

The predominant soil types located within the boundary are Derinda and Shullsburg silt loams. A small percentage of the property is wooded, primarily around drainages that feed tributaries of the Trimbelle River. Soils in these wooded areas consist mainly of Whalan and Dorerton silt loams as well as Beavercreek sandy loam. Most of the soils that occupy this property are well drained in nature. Relief across much of the forest management area ranges from 0-5%.

C. Current Forest Types, Size Classes, and Successional Stages

- i. Upland Grass – 103 acres (68%)
- ii. Northern Hardwoods – 45 acres (30%)
 1. 5-11 size class
- iii. Oak – 3 acres (2%)
 1. 0-5 size class

D. NHI: Endangered, threatened, Special Concern species, Species of Greatest Conservation Need

None present.

E. Wildlife Action Plan Conservation Opportunity Areas (COA)

The Wildlife Action Plan identifies Extensive Grassland Communities as a conservation opportunity area of state significance for the WPEL, including surrogate grasslands which are found on Clay Corners WA and are a High Priority for WPEL. Priority conservation actions that fit well with this property that are listed for the WPEL are:

- Promote agricultural practices that are compatible with grassland management, such as rotational grazing, greater use of small grains and hay crops and later harvesting of grass hay.
- Develop incentives for private landowners to maintain native prairies and shortgrass habitats.
- Partner with prairie and savanna restoration groups to more efficiently accomplish habitat management.
- Develop education tools and demonstration/training areas that promote prescribed fire and other prairie/savanna management practices.

F. Significant cultural or archeological features

None Present

G. Invasive Species

Several invasive species are found scattered across the property. These include: common buckthorn, autumn olive, box elder, burdock, birdsfoot trefoil, Canada thistle, and wild parsnip. Any management activity will seek to limit the impact of these species on the property.

H. State Natural Area designations

None present

I. Primary public uses



Interim Forest Management Plan

This property receives moderate hunting, trapping, and outdoor recreational use, primarily for deer and pheasant hunting. Other uses include trapping, hiking, dog walking, and other forms of nature-based recreation.

J. Biotic Inventory Status

A biotic inventory has not been conducted on this property.

K. Deferral/consultation area designations

None designated

IFMP components

Forest Management Objectives:

This property is managed primarily to restore prairie habitat conditions. Forest management actions will serve primarily to diversify habitat within the stream corridor, protect water quality, and to provide quality wildlife habitat. Forest management objectives include maintaining existing forest types and developing a diversity of age classes including both young and old forest areas for both game and non-game species. This will largely be accomplished through sustainable silvicultural systems that will increase the diversity and structural complexity of wildlife habitat while at the same time avoiding disturbance to riparian areas along the stream corridor. Oak species will be favored and retained over all other species to provide diversity and mast production for wildlife on the property.

Property Prescriptions (Identify specific and pertinent prescriptions by area or forest type, including passive management areas, extended rotation, and other information that will help achieve the objectives)

1. Maintain oak cover types at the expense of all other species.
 - a. Diversify age classes with emphasis on developing younger stands
 - b. Crop tree release oak in young stands
 - c. Regenerate oak stands where feasible and promote oak in young mixed hardwood stands.
 - d. Promote/retain larger diameter trees
 - e. Increase standing dead snags and coarse woody debris
2. Aspen
 - a. Maintain aspen and diversify age classes with emphasis on developing younger stands.
3. Northern Hardwoods
 - a. Promote species other than ash in the understory when conducting management
 - b. Promote some larger diameter trees where better soils exists
 - c. Increase standing dead snags and coarse woody debris
 - d. Favor sun dependent species whenever possible
4. Grasslands
 - a. Maintain grasslands through prescribed burning, grazing, haying, or mowing.

OAK – Most of the oak on the property is 20 - 40 years old. Crop tree release to ensure suitable growing conditions will be performed whenever possible. Maintain and promote oak through planting, timber stand improvement methods, thinning, coppice, overstory removal, and other techniques described in the DNR Silviculture and Forest Aesthetics Handbook. Promote the growth and retention of large oak through techniques such as thinning. Reserve/legacy trees should be retained as groups or individuals throughout the property within harvested stands to



Interim Forest Management Plan

maintain a component of large mast trees and promote both snag trees and course woody debris for wildlife.

ASPEN – Maintain aspen cover type by regenerating the stand using a coppice system. Favor winter harvesting for more abundant regeneration as well as reduced soil impact. Rotation age is generally 50 years.

Northern Hardwoods - Lower quality sites will be rotated and regenerated via coppice to provide forest structure. This will also be done in areas with high degrees of storm damage. Higher quality sites will be managed with group selection regeneration techniques as well as individual tree selection. The group selection technique will be used to diversify age class and structure. Sun dependent species such as cherry and hickory will be favored during management operations to provide species diversity.

ALL Stands:

- Follow proper BMP's to protect water resources on the property.
- Identify invasive species and use proper BMP practices and treatment options to eradicate or minimize impact.
- Identify and protect rare and endangered species and provide habitat for these species.
- Use thoughtful planning with forest management practices to enhance recreation opportunities on the properties.
- Retain reserve/legacy/green tree retention trees as groups or individuals throughout the property within harvested stands.

Prescriptions shown for the property below reflect planning through WisFIRS. These prescriptions may not all be completed, depending on if the stand develops slower than expected, commercial viability, or if the maximum allowable cut for the Black River Falls Area Other State Lands properties is already exceeded.

Clay Corners Wildlife Area:

2018: Comp. 1 Stand 3 – 31 acres of northern hardwood storm salvage through the use of intermediate thinning, crop tree release, and group selection.



Interim Forest Management Plan

PREPARED BY:

Ryan D Haffele

8/15/18

Property Manager

Date

APPROVED:

Harvey H. Halvorsen

September 21, 2018

Area Program Supervisor

Date

REVIEWED BY:

Forester

Date

District Ecologist

Date